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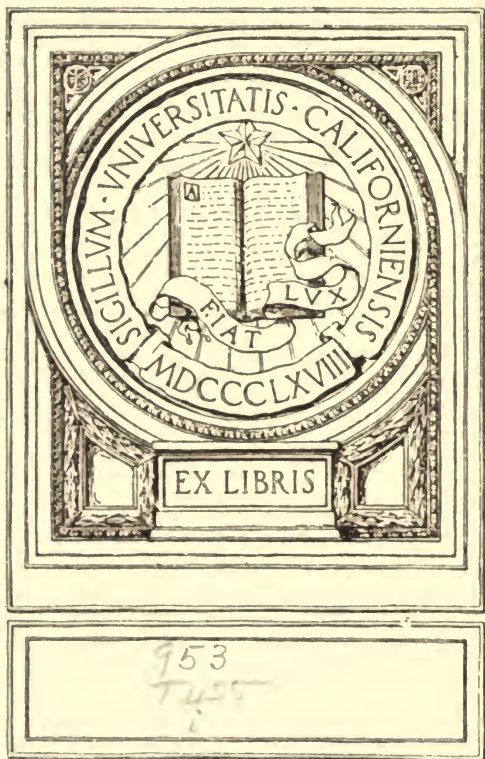


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THE INVERTED TORCH

BY EDITH M. THOMAS.





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THE INVERTED TORCH

BY

EDITH M. THOMAS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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TO THE
LIBRARY OF THE
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EDITH M. THOMAS

To
N. T. M. AND S. F. G.

MY SISTER AND MY FRIEND.

Faces wherein last shone the sinking light —
Hearts that throbbed nearest mine in the new
night —
Cherish these leaves by lonely memory traced
While faint hope starred the wide surrounding
waste.

*I dreamed that in thy hollowed palm
Thou heldst some measure of gray sand,
And pouring it from hand to hand
Still with a seer's inspection calm
Thine eye the sliding atoms scanned.*

*The greater part thou didst let pass
And only here and there retain
Some quick-discerned and precious grain :
These all were closed within a glass,
And ran a wonder-lighted vein.*

*Then with a vision's silent grace
Thou gavest me the glass to mark
All coming hours or bright or dark ;
But with the gift dissolved thy face,
A fading light within its place.*

*I wake not all from out that dream :
Mine hours, if bright or dark they be,
Seem noted ever, as they flee,
By that smooth-gliding magic stream
From the dull drift withdrawn by thee.*

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I.

TEMPLA QUAM DILECTA

THE INVERTED TORCH

I.

AH, what so mightless as their state,
Enfolded in the all-night's sleep, —
Sleep without dream or date !
Ah, what so mightless as their state ?
Yet strange regality they keep,
As on the dim hours sweep.

Ah, what so vacant as their state,
Wherein nor wish nor thought inheres,
Nor charge of small or great !
Ah, what so vacant as their state ?
Yet seem they vision-guarding seers
Of the unmeasured years.

Most unappealable those brows,
Those lips, those ears, that never failed

To our warm prayers and vows ;
Most unappealable those brows
That kindred sovereignty have hailed,
Yet from our knowledge veiled.

They are no longer of our time,
But to the eldest dead allied,
In mien estranged, sublime.
O God ! they are not of our time ;
So looked the first of those that died, —
So rapt, so glorified !

II.

BEHOLDING how immutable, august,
Looked that which was doomed downward
to the dust,
As though mortality itself had won
Long immortality beneath the sun —
I could not understand !
For when some roof-tree built by human
hand

Loses its brood, all round dejection reigns,
A wistful blindness dims the window-panes,
And the whole mansionry goes down apace.
But when the swift soul leaves her earthly
 place,
Doth the poor body her great joy divine,
And transiently with her exultance shine ?

III.

WHEN in the first great hour of sleep supreme
I saw my Dearest fair and tranquil lie,
Swift ran through all my soul this wonder-
 cry :
“ How hast thou met and vanquished hate
 extreme ! ”
For by thy faint white smiling thou didst
 seem,
Sweet Magnanimity ! to half defy,
Half pity, those ill things thou hadst put by,
That are the haunters of our life's dim
 dream.

Pain, error, grief, and fear — poor shadows
all,

I, to thy triumph caught, saw fail and fade.

.

Yet as some muser, when the embers fall,
The low lamp flickers out, starts up dismayed,
So I awoke, to find me still Time's thrall,
Time's sport, — nor by thy warm safe pre-
sence stayed.

IV.

THEN in that loneliest night of nights
I looked unto those ancient lights,
The myriad, the lidless eyes
Whereunder earth all naked lies, —
The stars I sought, if still they lent
To my appeal their dear consent, —
Immortal is man's soul!

But in that loneliest night of nights,
All unintelligent, those lights

(As gems that shone bright and aloof
Within a vast world-cavern's roof)
A hedge of lancing splendors wove,
And back the old entreaty drove, —
Immortal is man's soul?

V.

STILL-CHARMED by that so-seeming death-
less guise
The Soul's late-left and silent Temple kept,
It was as if a dateless cycle swept
Past me and past that grace which held my
eyes, —
As if all breathing life beneath the skies
For sympathy death-sleep inviolate slept.
But through the stillness gradually there
crept
Two sounds insistent, waking dull surprise :
One sound the voice of children at their
play,
And one the ringing anvil. "Mirth and
Toil,

Of Grief unmindful, keep their beaten way.”
So first I thought ; but then, “The Fate-
wove coil
Spares none of earth ; this is my bitter day,
And later they must feel Time’s wanton
spoil.”

VI.

I SOUGHT thine empty chamber, closed the
door,
And strove to know thine absence absolute.
In vain ! Not yet seemed Echo wholly
mute
To thy soft, slow, weak footfall on the floor ;
And all I touched or looked upon still bore
Thy touches vital, keen, beyond compute.
Then did my ranging eye in dull pursuit
Mark the clear sunlight through the window
pour :
Oh, then, upon that tide of airy gold
(That oft had crowned thy silvering locks
with light)

Revelment suddenly upon me rolled :
Eternal days, eternal days, all bright,
All void, all waste, as this must I behold,
Nor thou nor sign from thee make glad my
sight!

VII.

ONCE from the crisping pain and constant
throe
(As bath of fire around thee day and night),
Thou criedst aloud, thy sweet lips tense and
white,
If 't is some spirit power pursues me so,
I shall myself be spirit soon and go
To meet and question it with spirit might.
Then sank'st thou back to thine old patient
plight
And thoughts that only passing souls may
know.

Now evermore in me desire grows keen
To learn of thy soul's speeding, — if thou
met

Some blank All-Silent, or if thou dost lean
 On some All-Pitiful, not mindful yet,
 So wrapped in new-found ease and joy serene,
 To search why life must pay such heavy
 debt.

VIII.

.
 "Some lost Lady of old years
 With her beauteous vain endeavor,
 And goodness unrepaid as ever,
 The face accustomed to refusings.

 And so she glides as down a valley,
 Taking up with her contempt,
 Past our reach, and in, the flowers
 Shut her unregarded hours."

THOU hadst not slept an hour of that last
 sleep
 When my soul woke to know what it had
 lost,
 And met the shining face of what thou wast,

Whom time can touch no more, nor earth
can keep.

Thine eyes with love upfilled, unfathomed
deep !

Thine eyes reproachless still ! — ah, there-
fore most

My soul did with reproach itself accost,
And bid mine eyes to ache for grief, not
weep.

Thou, grateful-glad of every gladding thing,
Love's least return, and each white truce to
care !

For this my soul did lodge the sharpest
sting, —

Because thou hadst of these such lenten
share.

But thou departedst, unremembering,
A smiling vanisher in griefless light and air.

IX.

IN that first hour ! Oh, poignant stroke
Of all-invasive Light
That searched my spirit out, and woke
To clear discerning sight !

Thy life and mine before me swept :
Mine, dry with selfish need ;
Thine, beautiful, a fountain leapt,
Blessing with selfless deed.

Beneath me and around me gaped
A chasm of torment fierce ;
Where scourge and rack were dimly shaped,
But no sweet light could pierce :

No word to ply between us twain,
No clasping of the knees,
No heart-throe loosing tearful rain
That brings a taste of ease !

.

At last, didst not thou intervene,
And soft oblivion strow ?
For since that hour I have not known
Such gulping deep of woe.

X.

I TRAVELED far into the wilderness,
And found a spacious country choked with
dust ;
The cloven hillsides gaped all fountainless,
The crispèd forests showed as red as rust.

In all the land no green plant reared its
head ;
A plain of dust the sultry sky did seem ;
Along the river's void and silent bed
The hot air rippled like a phantom stream.

A Voice sprang up, than crackling flame
more fine,
And quivered through the waste, " What
dost thou here,

Within this realm o'erswayed by powers
 malign, —
This Land where None hath ever shed a
 Tear ?

“ What dost thou hope ? If any one might
 weep,
Then would the rain descend in fostering
 showers,
The stream along its crannied bed would
 leap,
The land laugh out in sudden grass and
 flowers.”

XI.

TELL me, is there sovereign cure
 For heart-ache, heart-ache, —
Cordial quick and potion sure,
 For heart-ache, heart-ache ?

Fret thou not. If all else fail
 For heart-ache, heart-ache,

One thing surely will avail, —
That 's heart-break, heart-break!

XII.

SOMETIMES in musings that grow quick and
keen,

The door I beat upon all wide is set,
And thou thyself and I thy child are met,
The barrier gone that late did intervene.

And then, since thou hast dwelt removed,
serene,

Unknowing of this world's tumult and fret
(Whose pulse and heat are in me mortal
yet),

I seek to tell thee what my lot has seen.
But on my lips the hurrying word falls null ;
For thou dost seem, great marvel in thy
gaze,

To look on somewhat dread and beautiful.
Its knowledge in thine eyes my babbling
stays :

What knowledge ! ah, forgive me, senseless
dull !

For thou with Death hast walked through
wondrous ways !

XIII.

WHEN from this distance I survey the past,
I marvel not at joys of bygone date,
Nor chide I them that, trivial, they seemed
great,

And sped the restless golden hours too fast.
Nay, dear as flowers that have brief time to
last,

My lost joys edge the roadway of that fate
Through whose deep mournful vale I came
but late,

And gleam unblotted in the shadow vast.

I chide not them ; but often as I turn
My eyes, new-undeceived, on that closed
way,

Here, here, and there, I pageant things discern,

That still at pantomime of Sorrow play, —
Once idly named My Griefs. These now I
spurn ;

Joy have I known, but Grief not till to-day.

XIV.

ON the day of earth thy last,
Up my spirit rose aghast,
For there came — a legion throng —
All our days in summer long,
All the days so gently paced,
All the days with favor graced,
All the beauteous days we passed,
Mindless there should come The Last.

All the days, from morn till noon,
With the evening's sweeter boon, —
All for Love's full showing meant,
Yet what part in silence spent !

Lips to speak, — yet most and best
In the heart left unexpressed !
Lips to speak, — such days in fee, —
Now what stores should voicèd be !

Still my spirit stood aghast,
For the days, as they drew past,
Strove each one its weight to cast
On that frail and speechless Last !

XV.

THEY bid me think, who seek to close my
wound,
How from life's storms thou hast escaped for
aye.
Their wonted words unobvious fire convey :
For then I see thee, in my heart's profound,
Stand as thou stood'st upon life's open
ground,
A mettled tenderness and braced for fray ;
I see thee whom no fortune could dismay,

Or make thy soul aught less than sweet and
sound.

The storms of life what noble strength shall
meet

And grow not stronger for the sharp as-
sault ?

But each hour's petty spoilure and defeat
Wear out the heart in fruitless sick revolt ;
So, not as freed from strife thy state I greet,
But as above such piteous waste exalt.

XVI.

TIME takes no toll of thee,
Age spares the soul of thee.
They vex thee no more,
Besieging thy door ;
Nor without nor within
Shall they vantage win.

The long years are fled from thee,
The winters are shed from thee,

As the snows retire
For Spring's hidden fire,
And the gray of the fields
To the young green yields.

The long years descend on me,
The winters bend on me
Their gathering might,
As when dwindles the light,
And the gray of the fields
To the white drift yields.

Now, ill or well with me,
Time and Age dwell with me ;
When thou wast set free,
They straightway sought me,
Laying siege at my door,
As at thine before.

What dear things desert to thee,
Youth doth revert to thee,
While I, as Fate steers,
Grow toward thy years,

That, gone out of mind,
Thou hast left behind !

XVII.

How dost thou live in that Life out of
thought, unencumbered and blest,
How dost thou live, now immortal, of ultimate being possessed, —
Nothing that turneth to rest, yet nothing
that knoweth unrest ?

Here, Life, to prolong her fond stay, with
care is consumed evermore ;
And calls a brief death-with-dreams, the
spoil of each day to restore :
How dost thou live in that Life without
waste, at the spirit's core ?

Nothing the keen Hour wounds, and nothing
that seeketh recure ;

Nothing of veiled response, that vexeth and
maketh unsure ;

Nothing that beckons the soul, to deceive
with a vanishing lure.

How dost thou live in that Life, — oh, never
the shadow of ours

(Shadow itself, that Time with illusory
heritage dowers),

But constant, supreme of all real, endued
with far pleasures and powers !

As tones transcending our sense, yet vibrat-
ing true in their height, —

As the element finer than air, that conveyeth
the shaft of the light, —

So is that Life unbetokened by sound, and
viewless to sight.

XVIII.

IF I might have from thee what boon I
would,

Or thou departing might to me resign
Some safeguard virtue wherein thou didst
shine

(No more required by thee where Peace
doth brood) ;

If I might seek, and thou bestow, such good,
What once possessed by thee should now be
mine ?

Thy courage ! give me that bright proof of
thine,

Arms and defense of thy soft womanhood !

Thy courage grant me ! for I waver here
As some late ill-fledged bird that, left behind
Amid the wreckage of the sylvan year,
Hath not sustaining power of flight to find
Where its gone comrades make broad summer cheer,

Nor is inured to cope with days unkind.

XIX.

(A VOICE IN A DREAM.)

SLEEP soundly through the long light night.
The day will come too soon, too soon.
Across the halo-circled moon
Ever some frailest cloud takes flight,
Bathed in rare light.

Oh, sleep !

For this would seem that form to limn,
For which, weeping, thine eyes grow dim —
Grow dim !

Sleep soundly through the long still night.
The day will come too soon, too soon.
Beneath thy casement falls aswoon
The lonely wind that sways so light
Yon pine's bleak height.

Oh, sleep !

For this would seem that voice late stilled,
For which thine ear hungers unfilled —
Unfilled !

II.

CLARIOR È TENEBRIS.

XX.

LOVE for the lover the worn world renews :
To his quick ear the harshest bird that
sings

Hath been in Heaven and learned delicious
things ;

To his quick eye the flower of dullest hues
Reveals it late was bathed in beauty-dews
That have been filtered from ethereal
springs.

He looks — he listens — all the air is
wings,

And full of sighed-out greetings and adieus !

Lovely the light through Love's all-colored
prism,

But sacred Grief can also wonders work,
Laving the world from an o'erflowing
chrism :

What stars, what stars shine through the
wonted mirk

Where night and dawn verge on the old
abysm,
And in dusk streams what trembling lustres
lurk !

XXI.

ME, in the darkness lying faint and low,
Grief touched, and murmured, " I will give
thee sight,

Whereto like some weak dream of yester-
night

Thy former vision's casual gleams will
show."

Then to my eyes, that used with tears to flow,
Came unreproug the slow winter light,
Yet wrought them to behold anew, aright,
The miracle of smooth night-fallen snow :

The breath from morning fires — the tree-
tops' haze —

The nest lone-swinging — fair, how strangely
fair !

I saw it all in swift and soft amaze : —
The whiteness, lo ! the track that thou didst
 wear ;
The heavens' musing loveliness, thy gaze ;
Thy voice, the deepened silence of the air.

XXII.

Now, more and more my heritage I learn, —
Oh, more and more that full bequest grows
 mine,
Which to my lone-left being fell from
 thine, —
The love of this fair earth ; sight to discern
In nature's face, however pale or stern,
A glory, and a grace, and touch benign, —
A western dawn spring from our day's
 decline,
A fervor white within the hoar-frost burn.

Dost thou not put me in possession sure
Of thine own loving, liberal eye's estate ?

Ay, more, — when some fresh scene makes
overture

With promise of revealment, strange, elate,
Dost thou from fount of heavenly vision
pure

Endow mine eyes with more than sight in-
nate?

XXIII.

Now I see, that careless went
In a dreamful rich content, —
Now I see how all life speeds
Where its crafty Hermes leads,
Into silence, into shade,
Downward, downward, downward weighed
By a stress that last or first
Knows nor halt nor step reversed.

Can it be that I alone
Have ignored what all things own,
Heeded not the common word
Every listening creature heard, —

That a Forfeit still devours
All increase of sunbright hours ?

Now I know, 'twixt earth and sky
Naught but breathes a conscious sigh,
And a sentient look has caught,
Answering unspoken thought ;
Simplest flower by forest-edge,
Hanging leaf and mirrored sedge, —
All in pensive musings lost ;
And the wood-bird's note is crossed
With a thrill of prescient pain !
Now I list, and not in vain,
When their congener they greet
With sad candor kind and sweet : —

“ Hast thou but so late, alas !
Learned that thou and thine must pass ?
Never was the truth concealed ;
Quivering lights on distant field
Often sought thine eye to gain,
And the wind and gentle rain
Strove to be articulate,
So to teach impending Fate.

Voice and sign, both failed alike
Thy deep-slumbering sense to strike ;
All monitions were despised
Till near loss thy heart surprised.
Thou and thine must pass, but we
Comradely will go with thee,
We and ours, with tears or laughter !
Every Vanished One draws after,
As the lamp that rules the tides,
As a hidden magnet guides,
As a clew within a maze,
Leading forth on unknown ways !
Latest Springtime, morning-faced,
Springs outlived pursues in haste ;
Reminiscent Summer hears
Summer-calls of yester-years.
Henceforth, oft as thou shalt see
One of ours, though least it be,
Trampled leaf or droop'd flower,
Yielding to its summoning Hour,
Thou shalt stand fast in thy place —
Gaze — and for a moment's space
Feel the clew more tightly run
Between thee and thy Vanished One ! ”

XXIV.

DAY by day the soul of things
Up its countless ladders springs,
Fleeting back to whence it came, —
Inviolatè, ethereal flame !
I have pierced its changing shapes,
Coils and turnings, deft escapes !
Up yon swaying shaft it stole,
Of the scarlet gladiolè.
First, the lowest bud it caught,
And with fire its chalice fraught ;
Then, with aspiration new,
To the bloom above withdrew.
Every flower, thus bereft,
Like a quenched brand was left, —
Quickly into ashes fell
When the Genius fled its cell !
On the morrow it will rest
In the topmost blossom-crest ;
Waving thence its light adieus,
Some unseen way it pursues.

Airy pyramid of grass
At its motion yields a pass.
Through the wind-loved wheat it flows,
Up the tufted sedge-flower goes,
Scales the foxglove's leaning spire,
Fans the wild lobelia's fire,
Where beside the pool it flashes ;
And the slender vervain's lashes,
By the climbing spirit swayed,
All their purple length unbraid.
Thus the soul of blooming things
Up its countless ladders springs.

XXV.

LAST time I saw thy mortal resting-place,
'T was covered all with a smooth weft of
snow,
Wherethrough some stems of yet sweet
mint did show, —
Memorials of the vanished summer's grace.
There, bending low, I marked a chary trace

Of footprints delicate, that to and fro
About thy quiet mansionry did go, —
Swift footprints of the least of Fauna's race.

These were thy winter friendings, faint yet
true,
From Nature, whom thou lov'dst so true and
well.
Spring came, and soft white blossoms round
thee blew
From that wild tree, thy shade and sentinel.
Though far away, its flowering prime I
knew,
And ofttimes seemed to watch those blos-
soms as they fell.

XXVI.

Now is the waking time of earliest bloom
In greening meadow grounds that south-
ward slope,
And woods that from the south sun gather
hope

To call their darlings from the nether
gloom.

Faint windflower hues the hasting clouds
assume,

And transient windows on the azure ope.

Now softly gleam the stars from misty cope,
And budded trees forefeel their leafy doom.

Oh seasonable, sweet awakening —

Oh restless joy of April day and night !

I to the earth my grievful heart would
fling ;

There, lying null to every sound and sight,

I would forget, — Gone Lover of the
Spring, —

Thy birthday now returns, but not thy light !

XXVII.

IN thine own garden (now a wild un-
trimmed)

White summer-hearted lilies, dashed with
rain,

Once bowed their regal height, still sweet
though dimmed, —

A fallen flower-fane,
Not to be reared again !

I could not know what symbol they would
form, —

Thou beaten down, so long by storm op-
pressed,

Then wrapped in the lone calm that follows
storm,

Benignity and rest
On brows, and lips, and breast.

XXVIII.

LAST summer like a jewel lies

In the seal'd casket of thine eyes,

With all lost hours and rare.

This summer greens thy footprint o'er,

And grows long sward about thy door,

But yieldeth thee no share.

Nor first-seen violet hast thou seen,
Nor misty veil of earliest green
 Clothe the gray forest-wall ;
Thou hast not probed the June's rose heart ;
Ah, if in all thou hast no part,
 Be thou a part in all !

Speak sometimes by a flower's soft mouth,
Or gather breath from the mild South
 Thy soothings to repeat.
Let thy voice live with deepening leaves,
And float to me, on quiet eves,
 From mystic fields of wheat.

XXIX.

I ONCE besought thee that thou wouldst
 return,
And, spirit, clothe thyself in symbol'd speech
That, though unheard, might still my spirit
 reach,
And arm to vanquish Death's negation
 stern ;

As, when spring's half-blown buds should
 seem to yearn
For freedom and the fostering warmth
 beseech,
Or when the stars, signalling each to each,
With soft access of light should seem to
 burn, —
That I in these thy beckoning soul might
 see.

Thine answer came, sad with prevision keen :
*Look not for this, but think, if it could be,
How many myriads gone had comfort seen.
From the all-binding law not one goes free ;
It is for us as it for all has been.*

XXX.

SOMETIMES long dwelling on thy blessed
 face
Imaged within, my vision's force o'ershot,
There grows a void in which I see thee not,
Nor eyes, nor brows, nor smoothed hair's
 silver grace :

The way to thee I can no longer trace.
So might some traveler bemoan his lot,
When all at once thick grass and herbage
blot

The path that leads him through some vague
waste place.

Nor will nor strong desire my sight can
clear,

Yet even as I turn, it so may chance
My eyes take in some trivial object near —
Enough, if it has known thy touch, thy
glance,

Enough! — it brings thee back, unstrange
and dear,

Thy shape, thy face, and light of coun-
tenance!

XXXI.

ALL passions that have birth
In clay-knit hearts do wear
The imprint of the earth;
Time's touch they ill can bear,

But wavering and infirm
They have their mortal term, —
Growth, vigor, and decline,
And lapsed do not renew ;
Kind Love, and Joy benign,
And Grief is of them too.

Perverse in unrestraint,
The passion, wild at prime,
The sooner worn and faint
Draws to its folding-time.

I said to Grief, " Refrain,
That thou mayst still remain,
And, full of eyes to see,
And voices touched with power,
Mayst sit and speak with me
In Life's far evening hour."

Grief to my gentle prayer
A yielding mind did lend,
To dwell with me, and share
Whatever Time should send.

Grief is no foe to Joy —
Good part of Grief's employ,

My spirit to beguile,
And show how passing mirth
Would win my Lost One's smile,
Were she yet here on earth.

XXXII.

Not that henceforth no more they share
Our once divided load of care,
And wake because we cannot sleep,
Not that with us no more they weep,

Strains on the longing heart so much
As when, at first, some chariest touch
From Life's kind angel, Humor, brings
Faint tremble to the unused strings.

Oh then, might we but see arise
The dawn of mirth in their sweet eyes,
While their full laughter's heavenly sound
Were in our hungering ears unbound !

XXXIII.

How long ago, how long ago, O Grief !
Twice have I felt spring winds arise and
 blow,
And vernal suns with quickening fervor
 glow ;
Twice have I seen the broad noon-silent
 leaf,
And twice have marked its fall, and whiten-
 ing sheaf
On many a gusty hillside bow'd low.
How long ago, O Grief, how long ago ! —
How brief the severing space, O Love, how
 brief !

Saith Grief to me, “Thou canst not well
 recall
Dear looks, dear tones, for the great time
 between,
That like a crowding mist confuseth all.”

Love saith, " Be these as present, heard and
seen ! "

Love chides because Grief's eyelids droop
and fall ;

Then Grief grows more because Love's vis-
ion is so keen.

III.

OPTIMI CONSILIARII MORTUI.

XXXIV.

How on the moment all changes !
 Quietude midmost the throng,
Peace amid tumult, and dissonance
 Charmed into vespertine song !

Dew on the dust of the noontime,
 Spring at the dead of the year,
Freedom discerned out of bondage,
 Grace in condition austere !

Praise to attemper world's censure,
 Monition allaying world's praise,
Shield interposed to the arrow,
 Instant clear path through the maze !

How on the moment all changes,
 Life shaking off its dull trance !

(Thou overwatching, Beloved One ?
Thou overruling, perchance ?)

XXXV.

SUBTLE-SWIFT recognizance
Of the soul's inheritance !
Even now the word that sped
From these lips thou mightst have said ;
Turn of phrase and voicèd tone
Were as they had been thine own ;
Oft these eyes thy glance repeat
When some moving scene they meet ;
Yet more deeply is inwrought
The similitude of thought.
So of thee I still shall learn,
So as with thy sight discern.
Then, if on my further way
Thou dost keep an oversight,
Though the earth thy shape forego,
Yet from thee shall influence flow ;
And if from my life proceed
Loving-kindness, generous deed,

Here I own that, in so much,
Still the world shall feel thy touch !

.

XXXVI.

I LEFT the home whence thou before hadst
passed.

One moment in the gliding landscape shone
The mornward hill-verge, winter-pale and
lone,

Where thou for dreamless sleep thy cham-
ber hast.

Oh, then, I saw thee as I saw thee last
(All fair, desiring nought, and envying none),
Save now above thee winter's fleeces strown,
And round thee calm, oblivious earth up-
cast.

I left the home whence thou hadst passed
before.

The swift train on through day and dark-
ness hurled :

But yet thy hill its mournful summit bore
'Mong woods and heights and clouds con-
fus'd whirled, —
Thy little dome of earth forevermore
Magnetic centre of my shattered world !

XXXVII.

How often have I watched the winter moon
Glide on through cloudy legions chased by
flaw, —
Glide on, or seem to glide, in lonely awe,
As fain to vanish from earth's ken full soon!
But, watching still, behold, swift lucent boon
Far-flashing through the vapory clefts I
saw ;
Since but the wind-borne clouds did fast
withdraw,
Unchanged that tender face of plenilune.

And so, when first thyself from me wast reft,
I seemed to see thee far, and yet more far,

Remove, rare-glimpsed through Time's wild-
woven weft

Of days and deeds that make our life or
mar.

These, cloud-like, have their passing ; thou
art left,

In my night-heaven, a constant beacon star.

XXXVIII.

Two powers the passive giant deep control.

The one, great foe to mass and unity,

Breaks up into ten thousand seas the sea,

And wanton drives it onward to no goal.

The other, as with bell of sphery toll

(Whether the wind be loosed or chainèd
be),

To tidal orisons draws holily

The mighty water with its yearning soul.

To the wide world my spirit open lies,

As lies the mobile sea beneath the wind,

That evermore its veering force applies.
But thou, beyond all and through all, canst
bind
And hold me still in fealty to the skies,
Swaying with heavenly influence undi-
vined.

XXXIX.

———“Hearts that yet
(Like gems in darkness issuing rays
They 've treasured from the sun that 's set)
Beam all the light of long-lost days.”

WITHDRAWING these crystalline drinkers of
sunshine into the dark,
Lo, quenched is the flame of rubies, dead is
the amethyst's spark !
The diamond alone exulteth when suddenly
seized by the night,
The diamond alone conserveth its hoard of
scintillant light.

Now, O my Soul, thou art tried ; and how
dost thou choose to be known ?
Ingrate, lost, and undone ? or peer of the
kingliest stone,
Lucid by day, and braving the dark with its
luminous freight ?
Hold thou the glow of thy Past, and shine
in the glooming of Fate.

XL.

SOME words of thine when words of thine
were few
And priceless dear, upwafted with a sigh,
Do ever greaten to my mind's fixed eye,
As legend on a magic door wherethrough
Wide-wandering pilgrims pass, and gain the
clue.
Thou saidst : *God set my heart no creed,*
but I
In goodwill towards His world have lived
— and die.
Then thy far thought in silence didst pursue.

That hour thy visioned word laid stress on
me

To let all watchwords pass save only one
(Howe'er confused and vexed these world-
cries be) :

Goodwill, Goodwill, Goodwill shall hence-
forth run

Through thought and deed. It were unfaith
to thee

To stoop with malison for malison.

XLI.

Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I, who have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him who does wrong, that it is akin to me, . . . I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman nor hate him.

Antoninus.

DEAREST lips that Time hath stilled,
In all gracious wisdom skilled,

Once those clement words brought home
From the purple of old Rome.

Though the morning give thee joy,
Thou shalt meet with much annoy
Ere the evening mild and gray
Comes to shrive the erring day.
Thou shalt meet with those who wear
Face, not heart, of Friendship fair.
Thou shalt meet with those whose praise
Tasteless burden on thee lays.
Thou shalt suffer wanton blame,
All unweeting whence it came :
Some shall envy thee, the while
Some thy well-content revile ;
Some shall hate, for this alone, —
That thy bounty they have known !
Random judgments thrown abroad,
Justice scorned, and Faith outlawed,
Heartless laughter of no mirth,
Lack of love, and Pity's dearth,
Thou shalt meet, — or thou, or thine
Dear by human bond divine.

Thou shalt see the boastful gain
What meek Worth shall seek in vain.
Thriftless running to and fro
Shall for zeal and service show.
Foolish ones shall sit in state
While the wise unplaced shall wait.

These are so, as thou shalt see,
Not too much perturb'd be, —
Nay, for this were harm's increase, —
In thy bosom nestle Peace!
These are so from blinded sight;
If thine eye have more of light,
Thankful, keep within the ray
Thrown upon thy fairer way, —
Thankful that no God commands
Thou go forth with scourging hands.

XLII.

HADST thou not prescience of my days to be
When thine own day should sink below
Life's west, —

That now I seem to fare on bidden quest,
Whose road and every chance were known
to thee?

Did not thy loving forecast circle me?

A look of thine caught back arms strong my
breast,

Thy word, Memory's inner-templed guest,
Springs up, from slackening doubt and fear
to free.

Thus one in midst of deedful times may
turn

The leaves of some old sacred book, and
start,

Finding foreshadowed there the thought
that burns, —

The act that burning thought coins from the
heart.

Thus one a phosphor-writing may discern —

But not till daylight utterly depart.

XLIII.

IN little years, from dreams of evil guise
That trouble childhood's sleep, I oft would
wake
Calling on one dear name whose might could
break
The charm that heavy lay upon my eyes.
Then, quickly won by thy soft-breathed re-
plies,
Came Peace, as stilly as the falling flake,
And Sleep within his blissful arms would
take
And bear me to the kiss of morning skies.

Still, still, awaking from some pain'd dream,
I call thy name — but with what other
cheer!
Now beats my heart beneath this touch ex-
treme
As slow with grief as once how fast with
fear!

Yet oft it seems (ah, might it more than
seem !)

Thou and thy shielding comfort still are near.

XLIV.

I COME to a certain realm in the Past
Lovely and lonely, and overcast, —
Sunlight and shadow, barren and bloom,
All overcast with a wondrous clear gloom !

There is the morning blossom half blind
With dew that the sun has yet to find ;
There is the magical flower once seen, —
Once and no more, by the wood-aisle green ;
And there is the bird, unnamed, that sings
With a melody caught from bubbling springs.

There are the Maytime orchard trees
That palace a myriad murmuring bees ;
There are the beechen vistas deep
That forever the gold of Autumn keep ;

While the journeying river, slim and bright,
Is merged afar in the hazy light.

There, in the hour that wakens the moth,
Up from the new-fallen harvest swath,
Languid sweetnesses wander, and die ;
In the thrilling calm of the deepened sky, —
There is the star that seems to hear
The song on the threshold, to childhood dear.

Rarely I come to this realm in the past
All with a clear gloom overcast,
For I too sorrowful-rich am grown,
So sweet an estate possessing alone.
Lovely and lonely, unshared, it lies, —
Save Memory dwells with thee, too, in the
 skies.

XLV.

Two words, upon the lips grown obsolete,
Are folded in the heart ; one stands for thee,

And one, close-linked with thine in music
sweet,

For sheltering love long-lost to thee and me.
Tell all that I would tell if thou hast found
That spirit lit with hope and touched with
mirth. —

Oh hearken, both (where'er in Heaven's
round)
To those dear guardian names I miss on
earth !

XLVI.

IN thy withdrawal from the near and known,
Past any touch of hands, past sight, past
call,

Thrice have I lost thee, — once my child-
hood's all,

When thou and I it seemed did wait alone
On the green curve of earth close to God's
throne,

And hearken well what secrets He let fall

About this lower kingdom's great and small,
In whisper and by sign now fainter grown.
Again I lose thee, Voice of Courage clear,
Thou Soul of Youth that didst my youth up-
stay !

And yet again I lose thee, — loss most dear !
For now, when I before thee hoped to lay
Some fruitage of the slow responsive year,
Thou, tarrying not, art gone the Lonely Way.

XLVII.

THOU wast a confidant, a refuge, still,
As when thy kisses balmed a childish hurt ;
A heartener of baffled lone desert,
Of strength too far essayed, of faltering
will ;
But see, I can forego thy tender skill,
All-comforting, all-healing, as thou wert ;
I can forego the shield that did avert
The ceaseless wear, the thrusts that sudden
kill ; —

I can forego thee in such bitter harms
As may along my journey ambushed, lie,
By thought that thou art freed from sharp
alarms

And taste of troublous days. But how shall I
Not speak, — not cast myself into thine arms,
Should ever some quick joy my cup fill high?

XLVIII.

WHEN fair days fall and fruiting hopes re-
pay

My care (not thee, who first and most gave
cheer),

Unfilled by all, my heart desires thee near —
Nay, dreams that thou the prosperous hour
dost sway !

But when there comes a season gaunt and
gray,

Winds pierce, and the mask'd heaven looks
austere,

I pray that thou art very far from here, —
Ay, in safe Paradise rapt far away.

Yet sometimes a new light unblinds my
eyes :

Even if thou my joys and sorrows knew,
Perchance to thee they would show other-
wise,

Or unregarded sink beneath thy view.
Could I to thine imagined height once rise,
What earthly pain or pleasure could subdue ?

XLIX.

It is the lover's vaunt that he transcends
All who have loved, or who in love excel ;
And if his tongue be rich-endowed, to tell
His love's esteem, a world of words he
spends.

My broken song for no such meed contends,
Nor dares my love to claim its parallel
In thine ; but on thy love for me I
dwell, —

Thine peerless, — met no more until life
ends.

Oh, mother-love, from childhood unexplored,
Oh, mother-love, all boundless in pure height !
(So to the bird a sun-filled heaven unsoared,
Tenderly overlies its daily flight.)
Lost Plenitude ! — Be thou not lost, but
 stored
Where I shall find thee after one strange
 night.

L.

OR is that love, as once, still round me
 poured,
Unknown because this dense mortality
With doubt or stern denial houses me ?
As though the ambient daylight were ig-
 nored
By one whose way of vision had been
 scored, —
As bird, that cannot past its cage-eaves see,
Might well forget that unto pinions free
Vast shining tracts the morning skies afford.

Yet moments there have been (too rare they
fall !)
When I, though blind and captive here,
have spurned
The darkness, and have shaken off the
thrall.
And then, where'er my quickened spirit
turned,
The light would seem as love diffused
through all,
The love seemed thou about to be dis-
cerned.

LI.

WHENCE this revelation wide,
Lucid as the morning tide,
Whereby thou art seen more clear
Than in mortal habit here ?
Now thy looks grow permanent,
As a star's glance earthward bent,
Ever there, though late descried,
Ever there, and patient-eyed.

Words of thine, unhearkened long,
Come as strains of Orphic song,
Or, as Corybantic flute
Deep-pervading, never mute,
Wake to courage and to trust,
Bid be just were all unjust.
Ah, that thou art so revealed
When between us speech is sealed !

LII.

FOREGONE to sight, to every sense de-
nied,
Voiceless, and vanished, nevermore to fill
Thy lacking place, — art thou not human
still,
With only human sorrow cast aside ?
Or now, that round me draws a novel tide
Of urgent days that sway me as they will,
Must I to thee grow strange, and stranger,
till
From all thou knewest I seem disallied ?

Look down with thine old tender, large re-
gard,

When my soul wavers from its clear de-
sign.

As once thou wouldst reprove, and afterward
Smile on thy child, half-humorous, benign,
Now even so (although in heaven starred),
Chide smilingly each human lapse of mine.

IV.

CÆLUM NON ANIMUM MUTANT.

LIII.

IF still they live, whom touch nor sight
Nor any subtlest sense can prove,
Though dwelling past our day and night,
At farthest star's remove, —

Oh, not because these skies they change
For upper deeps of sky unknown,
Shall that which made them ours grow
 strange,
For spirit holds its own ;

Whether it pace this earth around,
Or cross, with printless, buoyant feet,
The unreverberant Profound
 That hath no name nor mete !

LIV.

“ God must be glad one loves his world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me.”

HATH God new realms of lovely life for thee
In some white star, the soul of eve or morn,
Whose full and throbbing lustre makes for-
lorn

Us who not yet across the void shall flee ?
But why remote should now thy pleasures be,
When yet thy joy in nature was unworn,
Whether forth shot the blade of tender corn,
Or the wild tempest scourged the winter
tree ?

Seeker and seer of beauty in each phase
Of day or year through which the dear earth
runs,
Far be the Heaven of change-desiring ones,
Be thine not so ; but love thou still to gaze
On morning dews that wed with golden
suns,
And happy deaths of stainless summer days.

LV.

THOU hadst a joy in storms that sealike
surge,

A joy in tumult-stirring winds that fare
Through hollow heaven and through forests
bare,

A joy in the red lightning's lustral scourge.
Hence, to my ear comes no vague mournful
dirge

In the sweet tremblings of this wind-harp
rare —

Like thine, this dauntless gentle voice of air
Bids follow, follow to thought's farthest
verge !

Now God hath made thy spirit faint and
strange,

If thou thy choice of heavenly seats dost
find

Where never a brave storm the plains may
range,

And in its course wild minstrelsy unbind ;

But if thine olden pleasure knows not
change,
How friendly breathes on me this wintry
wind !

LVI.

IN those last splendor - freighted autumn
days
Thou murmuredst, leaning at the open door,
*The world, how beautiful ! — but mine no
more.*
Veiled, then, thy dark eyes' long-foregoing
gaze.
But when the year's night had shut down
their rays,
Thy words deep in my heart a pathway
wore —
The world, thy world, that brought thee so
rich store, —
Thy lost world ! — then not mine to love, to
praise !

Long time its voices nothing said to me,
Its wheeling lights across blank reaches
shone,

Because I deemed thou couldst not hear nor
see.

At last a slender flame of hope was blown,
That God takes not his much-loved world
from thee,

But still thou lov'st it, though in ways un-
known.

LVII.

ONCE, looking on the grass in summer deep,
That, myriad waving at the wind's light
will,

Vouchsafes no murmur, but is voiceless
still,

Thou saidst, *A secret the sly grass-blades
keep!*

And thou wouldst marvel how a flower doth
sleep,

Folding its dainties from the evening chill,

And how a tendriled summer vine has
skill

Sunward by one same spiral path to creep.

Now if the petals of a flower I part,
Or gaze into the green depths of a tree,
A trembling sense will glide into my heart,
To tell me, though I am too dull to see,
In all these gentler subtleties thou art,
And all that nature is, is known to thee.

LVIII.

THOUGH Life's tide ebbed or flowed beneath
my eyes,

Its ebb had but a legend's force for me
Until the reflux wave made prize of thee.
Now thoughts of Death forever in me rise,
But in no strange, in no forbidding guise;
So might some stream have prescience of
the sea,

So forecast of fruition thrill some tree
Rolling white-billowed bloom on Maytime
skies.

As foldwise the great sea awaits the stream,
As autumn is the green tree's toiled-for goal,
So is it peace to me, not strife, to deem
Death grows with all my days past all control,
And nearer brings oblivion — or dream —
Or boon awakening of the lifted soul !

LIX.

ONCE I sat down beside a seaward stream ;
Beneath the summer light's enchanted wand
The home-bound water, the green marge
beyond,
The long-descending pastured hills, did
seem
As some far bourne within Elysian dream,
Where souls, new-loosed from their most
grievous bond,
Between desireful hope and tarriance fond
Might wait till beckoned on to joy supreme.

With this came thoughts of thee in Paradise.
No more the bright home-drawing flood serene,
No more the lapsing hills, the happy skies
As dome of light, and stream, and hill were seen,
But as if thou, wide-browed, with blessing eyes
Subliming, softening all, didst through them lean.

LX.

OFt will this thought my current day arrest :
If from the round of being thou art shed,
Already am I too among the dead,
And but in semblant life, not real, drest, —
Semblant, the heart's strange knocking at the breast,
This sight with crowding images o'erfed,
This breath outgoing, and the vain word sped,
This brain with fictile labor still oppressed.

Swift then another thought this thought pursues :

But I yet live — I live — and thou livest !
Of sovereign being nothing shall I lose,
Nor hast thou lost, Life's close eternal guest,
Who after wandering gatherest up the clues,
While I grope many ways in obscure quest.

LXI.

SOME days there were whose dawns but lit
The voidness of an Infinite
That draws all life, yet life knew not,
When quest I made.

Some days there were whose nights forgot,
Or scorned, the ignorant stars above,
Pleaders inane for life and love —
Since these could fade!

From out that Void how hollow rung
What seers have breathed and bards have
sung,

Attesting Immortality.

My own heart's cheer
In mocking strain returned to me ;
So lonely need might send a call,
And, echo from the mountain wall,
Sole answer hear.

LXII.

THEN speaking, this had been my cry :
“ I have deceiv'd been ! Now I
Nor currency nor credit give
The heart's brave tale.
Not anywhere they longer live,
When once the earth has claimed its kin,
And from the haunts where they have been
Their faces fail.”

But, after-days, this voice arose :
“ Since the Event no mortal knows,
But Yea or Nay may still advance,
Nor pierce veiled fate.

To give the lie, thou liest perchance !
Foster not fear but hope the while,
And, closed in human life's defile,
Solution wait."

LXIII.

How dare we say, who live by breath,
They are no more, who have closed with
Death,
Faced that great total Dread of man,
Like some brave, mist-surrounded van
Their victory in the formless blank
Unsighted by the hereward rank !

They are no more ? 'That word is ours,
Whose hunted being shrinks and cowers,
Who turn our toil, and wind with craft,
To parry still the eventual shaft.
We whom death-perils each way hem —
Perchance we are no more to them !

Though it may be some guard they keep
Above this dream-beleagured sleep
That they once deemed, and we still deem,
Life, not its faint-divining dream, —
We are no more, — our now and here
Naught to those wakened spirits clear.

Sometimes wherever I may go,
Unto my heart thou livest so,
I marvel if the forms I meet,
The speech I hear, be Time's deceit —
If viewlessness and silence screen
More life than can be heard and seen!

Thou against all this shadow-world!
Thou between whom and me were hurled
Figments that mourning Fancy rears —
Thou against all that thus appears —
Thou, and the Life to be, 'gainst all
I dream and fear, and Life miscall!

LXIV.

I SPEAK what springeth in my soul to-day:
Thanks be that man believes his life hath
root

(However perish mortal flower and fruit)
So deep that thither nothing ill makes way.
Thanks for belief-in-life, Life's one great
stay,

Though wandering voices still faith's substance moot,

And even though should end the dear pursuit

Where, ending all, none heareth the dread
Nay.

I utter this, remembering a dead space
In which *Death*, *Death*, and *Death* alone
forth stood,

A legend written on the whole world's face,
In characters of monstrous certitude

It seemed no time nor power could erase ;
Yet something in my soul some faith re-
newed.

LXV.

I COULD not bear thy name should have no
part
In speech that human thought and impulse
frame ;
And so I still would press its fading claim,
With more of zeal than of strategic art.
Then on my lips would come with passioned
start
Its syllables that once so native came,
And passed, undwelt on. Now thy precious
name
I can contain in quiet in my heart.

I seek not now so much, with instant pain,
To make thee loved by those who knew not
thee.

By stranger's love and praise what couldst
thou gain?

It shall suffice that there remains for me
Thy light, as in some forested deep fane
Filled with sweet breath and sound from
many a tree.

LXVI.

OH, that thou hadst but crossed some ut-
most seas
Round strange shores beating, in unmapped
degrees!
Then might I trust to speeding sails, and
cleave
The deep ways of the sea through day and
eve,
And all the circling year, till I should
stand
Some morning at the prow, and greet Thy
Land.

Oh, that thou hadst thy dwelling, though
most far,

Within some one all-conscious - glowing
star.

Then might I waste towards thee, as on lone
height,

When all are gone, goes out the camp-fire's
light —

Or as gray Hesper from the hills was
borne,

After ten thousand vigil-nights forlorn !

Oh, that most surely thou wert Here or
There, —

Some certain goal whither my thought might
fare !

Oh, that from out the vague, formless Im-
mense

Came but one signal palpable to sense,
Foreshowing by what path my soul shall
start,

When it goes forth to find thee where thou
art !

LXVII.

I KNOW not why henceforward I should fear,
Once having felt the master-stroke of fate.
The waif upon some low reef desolate
Dreads not to quit his tide-lapped rock and
steer

His rude-framed raft over the waters drear,
Where yet unseen the mainland may await,
Or passing bark shall succor his estate.
So move I on, and with this certain cheer :
That thou no more art torn whate'er my
lot, —

Though round this life, once thy solicitude,
Were tightening now the clues of Time's
last plot.

Ay, thou mightst smile though near to death
I stood,

Thou knowing what death is, I knowing
not, —

A wanderer forth from shores with wreckage
strewn.

LXVIII.

“UPON the earth my child!” — “My
mother, thou!”

Such greetings when shall be — and where,
and how?

In these known accents or in some new
tongue

More sweet than any notes our wood-birds
sung?

Or, when in haven glides my bark distressed,
Wilt hush all words of mine with one word
“Rest!”

So at the first my soul shall merely sleep,
Full weary with the troubles of the Deep?

LXIX.

OFT have I wakened ere the spring of day,
And from my window looking forth have
found

All dim and strange the long-familiar
ground.

But soon I saw the mist glide slow away,
And leave the hills in wonted green array,
While from the stream-sides and the fields
around

Rose many a pensive day-entreating sound,
And the deep-breasted woodlands seemed to
pray.

Will it be even so when first we wake
Beyond the Night in which are merged all
nights, —

The soul sleep-heavy and forlorn will ache,
Deeming herself midst alien sounds and
sights ?

Then will the gradual Day with comfort
break

Along the old deeps of being, the old heights ?

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LXX.

THREADING a darksome passage all alone,
The taper's flame, by envious current blown,
Crouched low, and eddied round, as in af-
fright,

So challenged by the vast and hostile night,
Then down I held the taper ; — swift and
fain

Up climbed the lovely flower of light again !

Thou Kindler of the spark of life divine,
Be henceforth the Inverted Torch a sign
That, though the flame beloved thou dost
depress,

Thou wilt not speed it into nothingness ;
But out of nether gloom wilt reinspire,
And homeward lift the keen empyreal fire !

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